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BY
J. S. C. DE RADIUS,
A NATIVE OF SOUTHERN RUSSIA.

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P R E F A C E.

WITH the view to initiate the reader into the general plan of this unpretending volume, it becomes necessary to mention that throughout the whole, one purpose has been kept in view, namely:—to give a condensed historical account of the Slavonic languages, excluding all matter not bearing upon the subject.

The struggles, combats, and various events, which at one time or another have attracted

the attention of other countries to the Slavic nations, appertain to a different branch of History, and have here been noticed only, when they exercised a certain influence on the Slavic languages.

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INTRODUCTION.



CONSIDERING that nearly seventy millions of the inhabitants of the globe speak the same language, or at least dialects derived from a common source, it becomes a matter of surprise, as well as of regret, that their early history should be involved in an obscurity which the most diligent researches have not been able to elucidate. The analogy between the language of the Slavic nations and the Sanscrit, seems to indicate their origin from India; but to ascertain the time when they first entered Europe, is now no longer possible. This event, in all probability, took place seven or eight centuries before the Christian era, on account of the overpopulation of the regions of the Ganges. Herodotus mentions a people near the Ister, whose

name resembles that of a tribe now in Russia. Several other classical and a few oriental writers also allude to the Slavic nations occasionally ; the first distinct intelligence, however, is not older than the middle of the sixth century. At this period they are to be seen traversing the Danube in large numbers, and settling on both banks of that river. From that time, also, they frequently appear in the accounts of the Byzantine historians under different appellations, mostly involved in the wars of the two Roman Empires, sometimes as allies, sometimes as conquerors ; more frequently yet, notwithstanding their renowned courage, as vassals, but chiefly as emigrants thrust out of their own countries by the warlike Teutonic tribes. From the very nature of this information, it is impossible to expect any satisfactory knowledge. There are primitive traces of their fondness for music, and an early cultivation of the language ; still all this information is the more imperfect as it is collected from foreign authors, their earliest his-

torians not beginning to write before the second half of the eleventh century. At this time the Slavic nations were already in possession of the whole extent of this vast territory which they now occupy.

In the south, the Adriatic, the range of the Balkan, and the Euxine, are their frontiers ; the coasts of the Icy Ocean in the north. Their still greater extent in an eastern and western direction, reaches from Kamtschatka and the Russian Islands of the Pacific, where many of their vestiges exist among scattered tribes, as far as the Baltic, and along the banks of the rivers Elbe, Muhr, and Raab, again to the Adriatic.

This immense extent greatly adds to the difficulties of a general survey of the different affinities and connections of nations broken up into so many parts ; but a review of the language is the present object and purpose, and not the history of the people ; other remarks, therefore, will be introduced here only

so much as seem to be requisite for the illustration of the subject.

The remotest data for the history of the civilization of the Slavic race are to be found in their mythology :—and here the oriental origin again appears. The belief in a good and evil principle is met with among most of the tribes ; and even at the present time, in some of the Slavic dialects, every thing good, beautiful, and praiseworthy, is to them synonymous with the purity of the white colour. The custom among some, of females burning themselves with the corpses of their husbands, seems also to have been brought from India. There are other features belonging to them exclusively, which remind of the poetical imagination of the Greeks, such as their attributing life to the inanimate objects of nature—rocks, brooks, and trees ; and of peopling with supernatural beings the woods and mountains which surrounded them. The *Rusalki* of the Russians—nymphs, naiads, and satyrs—are

still to be found in many tales and songs of several tribes.

There are no very ancient remains of their language, except those words or phrases scattered through the works of foreign historians,—and these mostly perverted by a want of knowing the language themselves. Besides these, the names of places, of festivals, still exist, as well as some songs of the Russians, Bohemians, Servians, and several Slavic tribes, evidently belonging to the Pagan period; but having been preserved only by tradition, their diction has been changed in the same proportion as the language of ordinary life. It is, however, probable that at least one Slavic idiom was cultivated in very ancient times, from the circumstance that Cyril's translation of the Bible, written in the middle of the ninth century, bears the character of almost perfection; and thus this language must have been the means of expression for more cultivated persons several centuries prior.

Before taking notice of the different branches, it becomes necessary to direct the attention to the whole great source from which, in the most ancient times, the various branches appear to have ramified. A vast chaos, indeed, reigns in the classification of the Slavic nations :—with the view, therefore, to obviate this confusion, two divisions, according to certain affinities and differences, have been established, namely, the Eastern and Western, although the origin from the south is common to all.

EASTERN STEM.

RUSSIAN BRANCH.

1. The Russians of Slavic origin form the bulk of the population of the European part of Russia. All the middle provinces of this immense empire are occupied almost exclusively

by a nation of purely Slavic extraction; and even those scattered through Asiatic Russia are of the same race. To ascertain their exact number is exceedingly difficult. The statistical tables give the number of the Russians proper at about 40,000,000; but it must be remarked, that these statistical assertions have met with contradiction.

2. The Russniacks, or Ruthenians, are found in Malo-Russia, the south of Poland, Galicia, Red-Russia, the Bukovina, and also in the north-eastern part of Hungary, scattered over Wallachia and Moldavia. The Kozacks, especially the Zaporogueans, belong chiefly to this race, while the Kozacks of the Don are more mixed with pure Russians.

ILLYRICO-SERVIAN BRANCH.

The Illyrico-Servians, frequently called Raitzi, comprise the following subdivisions:—

1. The Servians, between the rivers Timock,

Drina, Save, the Danube, and the Balkan mountains.

2. The Bosnians, between Dalmatia, the Balkan, and the rivers Drina, Verbas, and Save.

3. The Montenegrins, or Slavic inhabitants of the Turkish province Albania, among the mountains of Montenegro.

4. The Slavonians, or inhabitants of the Austrian kingdom of Slavonia and the Duchy of Syrmia, between Hungary in the north, and the south of Bosnia.

5. The Dalmatians, between Croatia and Albania, likewise belonging to the Austrian empire.

6. The Austrian kingdom of Croatia, divided with respect to the language into two parts; one having affinity with the Servians and Dalmatians, the other with the Slovenzi of Carniola and Carinthia.

7. The Slovenzi, or Vindes, comprise the Slavic inhabitants of the Duchy of Styria, Carinthia, and Carniola.

THE BULGARIAN BRANCH.

The Bulgarians occupy Turkish provinces between the Danube, the Euxine, the Balkan, and Servia; this remnant of a once powerful nation amounts to about three millions.

WESTERN STEM.

CZEKO-SLOVAKIAN BRANCH.

1. Bohemians and Moravians. Both belong to the Austrian empire.

2. The Slovaks, inhabiting almost all the northern part of Hungary, speak different dialects.

POLISH BRANCH.

This comprises the inhabitants of the present

kingdom of Poland, of the since 1772 called Russian-Polish provinces, the Duchy of Posen, Galicia, and Ludomeria. In the Russian provinces, formerly called White, Black, and Red Russia, and conquered by the Poles in remoter times, the peasantry are Russians and Ruthenians; in Lithuania, Lettones, an entirely different race, amongst whom, in some parts, a language exists, of which many words bear strong resemblance to the ancient Greek.

SORABIAN-VENDISH BRANCH.

These are remnants of the old Sorabæ and several other Slavic races in Lusatia and some parts of Brandenburg.

Besides the races enumerated, Slavic tribes are scattered through Germany, Transylvania, and Wallachia,—nay, through the whole of Turkey; but to ascertain their number is a matter of impossibility, and in every respect of little consequence. May it suffice to remind

the reader of the two great divisions which mark the distinction in the Slavic language.

The almost endless dialects in use among the numerous races, must become without interest to the reader unacquainted with them; all which appears to merit notice is consequently the general character and genius of the language.

The analogy between the Slavic and the Sanscrit consists, indeed, only in the similar sound of many words; but the construction of the former is purely European. The Polish language is remarkably rich in every kind of flexion, not less so in these variations is the Russian. From this it may be concluded of what precision, compactness, and energy, a language is capable, which has so little need of circumlocution. It is true that in most of the Slavic dialects, with the exception of the Serbian, the consonants predominate; but considering that in a language the consonants are the indication of ideas, and the vowels subservient

to the consonants, the harshness of some of the Slavic dialects will appear less than generally represented.

The euphony of single syllables is only partial; but the harmony of a whole language depends on the euphonic sounds of periods, words, syllables, and single letters. What language possesses these four elements in equal proportion? Too many vowels sound just as unpleasantly as too many consonants; an interchange of both alone can produce real harmony. The pure and distinct vocalization, which does not leave it to the choice of the speaker to pronounce certain vowels or to pass them over, as is the case in German, French, and English, gives to the Slavic languages the advantage of a regular quantity of their syllables. The roughness of the Slavic idioms, of which foreigners have complained so frequently, is exclusively to be ascribed to inexperienced or tasteless writers, or to ridiculous mistakes of those unacquainted with the language. No

wonder, therefore, if the richness, precision, and general perfectibility of the Slavic languages is completely marred by existing decided prejudices.

From these introductory remarks the attention of the reader is directed to the historical part of the languages in use among the principal Slavic nations.

PART I.

NOTICE OF THE OLD CHURCH SLAVIC LANGUAGE.

It can hardly be doubted that, in very ancient times, the whole Slavic race spoke one language ; and if early it has been broken up into several dialects, such was the natural result of the wide extension of the different races ; but where the old Slavic was originally spoken, and which of the still living dialects has been immediately developed out of it, is a question which has caused many animated discussions. Formerly the general view was, that the ecclesiastical Slavonic must be considered as the root of all the living dialects ; this, however, has been contradicted, and the Church Slavonic proved to be an older branch of the original Slavic. The circumstance that the language of the Slavic Bible was, in Russia until the reign of Peter the

Great, exclusively the language of books, confirmed the natives for a long time in the belief that the Old Russian and the Church Slavic were one and the same language, and that the modern Russian was immediately derived from the latter. Be this as it may, the Old Slavic has long since become the common property of all the Slavic nations; and after having ceased for centuries to be a language of ordinary life, it has obviously lost that kind of pliancy and facility which only a living language, employed to express all the daily wants, can acquire. But, on the other hand, it has gained in solemnity and dignity. Imposing by its very sound, it seems to have become almost unfit for any trivial use, and only to be devoted to serious subjects. The domains of the Old Slavic, which seemed at first very great, were soon, by the jealousy of the Romish Church, limited to Russia and Servia; and in other parts the Slavonic worship was, after some struggle, supplanted by the Latin.

According to inquiries instituted into the Old Slavic literature, the history of the Old Slavic Church language may be divided into three periods.

The first, from the ninth to the thirteenth century; the second, from the latter to the sixteenth century; and the third, from the sixteenth century to the present time,—the last period comprising the modern Slavonic of the Church books in Russia and Poland.

The most ancient documents of the Old Slavonic language are not older than the eleventh century. Besides such, are several inscriptions on stones, crosses, and ornaments of equal antiquity.

The number of monuments of the Old Slavic increases considerably in the second period; amongst which Nestor's Annals, in the Old Slavic language, form the basis of Slavic history, and are not without importance for the whole history of the middle ages.

The third period begins with the sixteenth

century. In the course of time, and after passing through the hands of many ignorant copyists, the books relating to the Old Slavic Church language had in some parts become almost unintelligible; the necessity of a revision was therefore strongly felt, and instituted in 1512, at the request of the Czar Basilius Ivanovitch.

In modern times considerable attention has been devoted to the examination of the old Slavic language, and its relations to its affined dialects.

PART II.

EASTERN STEM.

THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE.

The name of Russia and the Russians is not older than the ninth or tenth century. The northern part of that vast empire, however, was long before inhabited by Slavic nations, who seem to have been divided into small states, under chiefs chosen by themselves, and most of them tributary to more powerful neighbours. About the middle of the ninth century civil dissensions arose among the Slavi of Novogrod, menaced at the same time by the conquering Varegians, a Scandinavian tribe, they therefore, in 862, chose Rurick, the chief of the Varegians, for their own head. Rurick founded thus the first Slavo-Russian state, and his followers settled down among the Slavic inhabitants of the country, imparting to them their warlike spirit. It is only since that time that the Slavi appear

as conquerors; and their empire, as well as their power and external influence, rapidly extended.

Jaroslav, the son of Vladimir the Great, at the beginning of the eleventh century, on his death-bed divided his empire among his sons. Owing to dissensions which followed, the Mongols broke into the country, and easily subdued the Russians, and succeeded, in 1237, to make them tributary for 200 years.

In the middle of the fifteenth century, Ivan Vasilievitch III. delivered his country from the Asiatic invaders, conquered his Russian rivals, and united Novgorod with his own principedom of Moscow. From that period the power and welfare of Russia have increased without interruption, and rapidly, to the present time. The literary cultivation of its inhabitants has likewise advanced.

The history of Russian literature has five distinct periods. The first comprises an interval of more than nine centuries, from the date of the first knowledge of the Russian Slavi, to the

coming of age of Peter the Great, in 1689. This long period would easily admit of subdivisions ; but it is so very sterile, that a few words will suffice to give a general survey.

The second period extends from the coming of age of Peter the Great to the accession of Elizabeth his daughter, in 1741.

The third period may be considered to begin with Lomonosoff to Karamzin.

The fourth embraces the interval from Karamzin to the accession of the Emperor Nicholas, in 1825.

The fifth, from the Emperor Nicholas to the present time.

Before proceeding, a few words relating to the characteristic features of the Russian language appear to be necessary.

The principal dialects are :—

1. The Russian proper, the true literary language of the whole Russian nation : and here it must be mentioned, that on the banks of the Wolga, on the Oka, and on the Moskwa, the

same pure Russian is heard in the drawing-room and from the pulpit, as well as in the most humble spheres.

2. The Malo-Russian, the language of the south of Russia. The principal difference between this dialect and the Russian proper consists partly in the pronunciation of several letters, partly in many forms of expression, resembling the Old Slavonic. The influence of the Polish is still perceptible in the language. This dialect is especially rich in national songs, of which many are of peculiar beauty, touching *naïveté*, and a poetical truth surpassing all artificial decoration. The comic, for which it is admirably adapted, a foreigner is less able to appreciate, since indeed all excellence of a comic description can be felt only by those who are familiar with all those minute local and historical circumstances, the allusions to which augment the ludicrous.

3. The White-Russian is the dialect spoken in Lithuania, and especially Volhynia. All the

historical documents of Lithuania are written in this dialect. The first Russian translation of the Bible was written in it.

Considering the Russian language as a whole, its immense copiousness must strike the attention. Having been in early times subjected to the influence of the Scandinavian, Mongolian, Tartar, and Polish languages, it is in this respect to be compared with the English, in which the ancient British, the Latin, the Saxon, the Danish, and the French are amalgamated. But the great pre-eminence of the Russian appears in the use which it made of its adaptations. Another excellence is the great freedom of construction which it allows, without becoming unintelligible or even ambiguous. Its adaptedness for poetry is undeniable; of which the incomparable national songs afford numerous evidence. As to its euphony, what has been said before of the Slavic languages in general, may be applied particularly to the Russian.

First Period.

The influence of the Varegians appears to have been inconsiderable, their idiom being soon absorbed by that of the natives. Rurick's grandsons had already Slavic names. The principal event in those remote times, and one which manifested its consequences in respect to civilization there, was the introduction of Christianity towards the end of the tenth century. Vladimir the Great, the first Christian monarch, founded the first schools; Greek artists were called from Constantinople to embellish the newly erected churches at Kief. Vladimir and his Knights are the Russian Charlemagne and his Peers, King Arthur and his Round Table. These deeds and exploits serve even now to give to the earlier age of Russian history a tinge of that romantic charm, of which the history of the middle ages in general is so void.

On the whole, the Russians enjoyed at that early period as much mental cultivation as any

of the other of the northern parts of Europe. Jarvslav, the son of Vladimir the Great, was not less active than his father had been in advancing the cause of Christianity, and all that stands in connection with it. The theological productions of this epoch are of less value than the historical, although the field was diligently cultivated. Most of the productions which belong indeed more to the history of the Slavonic than of the Russian literature, perished in the devastations and conflagrations of the Mongols. From 1298 to 1462, the Russian princes, as mentioned, were vassals of the Mongol Tartars. In the course of these two centuries, nearly every trace of cultivation perished. The Mongols set fire to the cities, sought out and purposely destroyed all monuments of national culture. The convents alone found a sort of protection; hence science became more than ever the exclusive possession of monks.

The re-establishment of Russian independence in the middle of the fifteenth century had a

reviving influence. Some of the Russian princes invited artists and physicians from Greece, Italy, and Germany into their country, and rewarded them liberally. Ivan IV. ordered schools to be founded in all the cities of his empire; under his reign the first printing-office was established in Moscow, in 1564. The princes of the house of Romanoff showed themselves not less active. Alexis and Fedor, the father and brother of Peter the Great, appear as his worthy predecessors. During this whole latter period, the Polish language and literature exerted a decided influence on the Russian. The first germs of dramatic art were likewise carried from Poland to Russia. In Kief, the theological students performed ecclesiastical dramas, and travelled about during the holidays to exhibit their skill. Their renown penetrated from the convents to the court, where they performed before Czar Fedor. His minister Matveyef invited the first stage players to Russia, and at his instigation the first secular drama, a translation

of Molière's "Médecin malgré lui," was played before the gratified princesses and their delighted maids of honour. The sister of the two Czars, the Czarina Sophia, composed several tragedies and comedies herself, which were acted before her by her ladies.

The department of history was very productive. Not only were the Annals of Nestor continued with zeal, but a series of other annals, biographies of princes, and chronographies, were produced. The weakest part of the literature of this later portion of the period is the theological branch.

The light of the Reformation, at that time spreading its rays over all Europe, did not penetrate into the Russian church, which, however, has always distinguished itself by a spirit of Christian meekness.

Second Period.

The history of the genuine Russian literature

begins only with the adoption of the usual language for all civil writing and public business. Before Peter the Great was able to establish a Russian printing-office in his own empire, in order not to lose time he gave a privilege for fifteen years to a Dutch printer for Russian works. About the year 1704, the Czar invented himself some alterations in the Slavic letters, so as to make them more similar to the Latin, and the first Russian newspaper was printed with them at St. Petersburg in 1705; these letters are in use at the present time: in all theological writings, however, the ancient form of letters is preserved, and therein consists the difference between the civil and church alphabet.

The energy with which Peter the Great proceeded, caused Russia to overleap a whole century; the Russian nation, susceptible of deep impressions, willing to be guided by a hand acknowledged as that of a superior. The only impediment in those innovations was an inex-

perienched, apprehensive, and jealous priesthood. Whether the rapidity of the Czar's improvements was a real benefit, is not the place to examine here; yet, with regard to the language, although it possesses all the elements of completeness, it must be admitted that the, in some instances, vehement innovations, prevented its gradual development, by which it would have preserved its original peculiarity,—that wonderful blending of the east and the west, of Asiatic suppleness and European energy, of which the national songs give such affecting, and often powerful specimens.

Books were ordered to be translated from the German, the English, the French, and the Dutch; the haste, however, with which this was performed, and the greater attention to the matter than to the form, had the natural consequence that most of these translations were inferior productions, executed without the least regard to the Russian language itself. Beauties of style, and even mere purity of language,

belong in a certain measure to the luxuries of literature ; the Czar thought only of utility.

In historical contributions this period is not without interest ; but as not the slightest attention was paid to style, and, moreover, those who wrote did not know from what principles to begin, the language remained entirely uncultivated. Meanwhile the national songs held faithfully to the old Russian irregular, but highly musical numbers, so much charming the ear.

Third Period.

From this period the standard of Russian literature, as it appears at present, must be dated. It was the Emperor Peter's hand that unfurled it ; it was Lomonosoff who fixed it on Russian ground ; whilst the fortunate caprices and vanities of Elizabeth and Catherine made rally round it more admirers and followers than otherwise would ever have been the case. In 1758, the University of Moscow was founded,

and other similar institutions were established by Catherine's unbounded liberality.

It was in an obscure family that Lomonosoff, the creator of Russian prose, was born in 1711. Fortunate circumstances made him find patrons and means to follow an ardent desire for mental cultivation, and subsequently to visit foreign countries, where he improved the knowledge acquired at home. At his return he was honourably employed by the Government, and died in 1765, although in the enjoyment of general esteem, but not with that degree of reputation awarded to him by a more judicious posterity. He first ventured to draw a distinct line between the old Slavic and the Russian languages, and laid down fixed rules for the general compass of the language. None of his productions are without merit, but he possessed more sagacity and innate talent than genius.

The first Russian theatre was instituted in Jarvslav, in 1746. The foundation of a national stage at Moscow, in 1759, served much to

awaken the dramatic talent of the Russians,—a faculty in which they are perhaps incomparable.

The partiality which caused the Russians ever to pay attention to their national history, deserves the highest commendation ; as for theological and biblical literature, scarcely any thing interesting meets the observation.

Fourth Period.

The number of Russian writers during this period increased considerably, owing to the zeal shown by the Emperor Alexander, during the first years of his reign, for the mental cultivation and enlightenment of his subjects. Besides the universities, eight in number, of which the Emperor Alexander founded five, an Institution for the study of oriental languages was established at St. Petersburg in 1823, and in 1829 a similar one at Odessa, a city which has by its position more natural advantages for the learning of Asiatic languages than any other. Although the object of the oriental schools in Russia was

originally to educate translators for diplomatic missions, they proved very useful in general, foreigners having availed themselves of opportunities for studies which their own countries could not offer.

The field of Russian literature extended itself during the course of the Emperor Alexander's reign, or rather from 1800 to 1822, with most remarkable rapidity. In the year 1787, the number of books in the old Slavonic and Russian dialects did not exceed 4000; before 1820 twice that number was counted; the year 1820 alone produced 3400 works, 800 of them translations from the French, 483 from the German, and more than 100 from the English. But at this time literature in Russia appears to have reached its height, in respect to productiveness, but retrograded also with still greater rapidity. Three hundred and fifty living authors were enumerated in 1822, mostly belonging to the nobility, their literary activity being chiefly confined to words of fiction.

Nicholas Karamzin, from the commencement of whose influence this period of Russian literature is dated, was born in 1765. In spite of an early development of his literary predilection he entered the military service, which was then considered as the most honourable in Russia. After two years spent in travelling through Europe, he opened his literary career with the publication of a periodical called the "Moscow Journal," which exercised a decidedly favourable influence on Russian literature; a certain sentimentality pervades these productions, which evidently bear the stamp of the author's youth. He showed more maturity and energy in his second periodical, the "European Messenger." But his principal reputation rests upon his history of the Russian empire. In the composition of this work Karamzin was much favoured; all the archives were opened to him, all documents delivered into his hands, and when it was completed, rewards and testimonials were heaped upon the author with imperial munificence. The beauties of Karamzin's

style are so entirely idiomatic, that no one who is not perfectly acquainted with the language is able to appreciate them. Over the barbarism of ancient times, he dexterously throws a veil of embellishment, and lends a spirit of chivalry and romantic charm to historical persons and deeds, where all the circumstances of place and time appear in absolute contradiction; so far that the reader thinks to peruse a novel. In spite of those deviations and unhistorical colourings, Karamzin's History of Russia will remain a standard work in Slavic literature, partly on account of the copiousness of its sources, partly in consideration of the amazing diligence therein displayed. In respect to Karamzin's innovations, he considered the French and English mode of construction as better adapted to the Russian language, than the imitation of the classical structure. He adopted with ease and gracefulness the peculiarities of the modern languages; but a portion of his imitators, misinterpreting Karamzin, introduced Gallicisms. This caused an opposition to be formed, insist-

ing upon preserving the influence of the Church Slavonic upon the Russian language, and resulting in two parties dividing, in some measure, the field of Russian literature. To foreigners, the travels of the Russians by sea and land must become more interesting and instructive than any other part of their literature. The regions of Malo-Russia, the Caucasus and Taurida, of which previously little was known, were explored by Russians, and described in valuable volumes. An account of China was translated in 1827 into the English. The works of the head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission at Pekin, published in 1828 to 1832, are of great importance for the knowledge of China, Thibet, and the country of the Mongols. The national feeling of the Russians has led them, during the period of their literary history, to examine the nature of their language; and all the researches which could throw additional light upon the past have been favoured and advanced by persons of distinction and influence.

Fifth Period.

This period opens with a tragical catastrophe, by which several literati of fame and distinction fell victims to their imprudence. It was evident that the Russian muse was no longer satisfied with the limits hitherto observed; she was no longer the shepherdess who inspired so many with sweet yet tame verses; she had by pernicious influences gradually become metamorphosed, and efforts therefore were necessary to arrest eccentricities, and to make Russian literature what it had been before. The spirit of historical researches, as well as the interest for the study of the Slavic languages, was already awakened in the preceding period. Everything was done to favour it, and to nourish that zeal which tries to penetrate the past in order to search for those links which connect it with the present.

In reference to the critical researches through all branches of history, the present may be ap-

appropriately called the historical period. The examination of manuscripts and historical documents was not confined to the libraries of the Empire; researches were instituted in Paris, Germany, Denmark, Bulgaria, and among the Russian tribes of Northern Hungary, by persons sent thither; and a general interest was thus awakened among the higher classes of society.

The treatment of modern history in Russia has its difficulties, which easily may be comprehended; and in no department has Russian literature remained more behind than in the treatment of foreign, and especially European, history. The series of publications relating to it consist almost exclusively of defective translations, or feeble imitations. In respect to the history of several Asiatic nations, other countries almost entirely depend on Russian writers.

The literature of travels to foreign lands is at the present period not rich; travels in the interior even are not very easy. Two collections of old travels, one to foreign countries, another

comprising the accounts of foreigners who travelled in Russia in olden times, have, however, recently been published.

The department of *belles-lettres* generally distinctly characterises the genius of a nation. The tendencies which in Russia prevail in the other branches, viz. a revival of interest for all that is native, Slavic, or relating to the past; the reaction from a period of predilection for all that was foreign, is very clearly perceptible in this portion. After this remark it cannot surprise that towards the close of the last, and especially at the beginning of the present period, the historical novel was cultivated with particular fondness, and almost exclusively devoted to Russian history. As to poetry, Russian critics consider the short-lived productiveness in this department as being apparently on the decline; solitary voices are heard, and these voices seem to be exhausted almost as soon they are heard. The more exuberant, however, appears the dramatic department, where the reverential

attachment of Russians to their monarch is exhibited in the very titles chosen by several dramatic authors.

In the different branches of natural science, the progress in Russia has recently been immense. In regard to periodical literature, the number of journals is obviously limited. That which most favourably speaks of the merits and exploits of the nation, is always considered as the best. The recent events in Europe have of course, more than ever before, provoked measures to exclude the influence of foreign literature, although the merits of foreigners in relation to Russian history, &c., and their labours in relation to the language, must be acknowledged as most distinguished.

NOTICE OF THE ILLYRICO-SERVIAN LANGUAGE.

The literature of the western Slavo-Servians has hitherto been altogether treated as a distinct branch, separated from that of their brethren of the oriental church. Their language, however, being essentially the same, and a difference

merely existing in the letters, the separation is not sufficiently established.

The Servian language is spoken by about five millions. The southern sky, and the beauties of natural scenery, so favourable in general to the development of poetical genius, appear also to have exerted a happy influence on this language. While it yields to none of the other Slavic dialects in richness, clearness, and precision, it far surpasses all of them in euphony, being decidedly the most melodious of the Slavic languages, rich in vowels, and abounding in soft and powerful accents. The ancient *Illyricum* comprised all the countries situated between the Adriatic and the Black Sea, and along the Danube. Towards the middle of the seventh century, this vast country appears occupied by a Slavic people, of one and the same race. An impenetrable night rests on the early history of these regions, originally divided into six kingdoms; and although some light has been thrown on this general topic, the investigations have been of little consequence for the history of the

language. As early as the seventh century, a part of these nations embraced Christianity, which, among the remainder, found a ready reception in the eighth and ninth centuries. The partial revival of Servian literature in 1758 produced a considerable number of works, among them not a few, notwithstanding the mixed and unsettled idiom in which they are written, attest the general capacities of the nation. This department would have become more accessible to foreigners, did the great variety of letters and forms of writing not discourage to penetrate into a structure where so much confusion is encountered at the first step.

This notice concerning the language of the Illyrico-Servian branch must be considered as very superficial, inasmuch as the dialects and literature of some of the nations, mentioned at the beginning of the subdivision, are exceedingly attractive, and in some instances quite original and distinct. Details, however, would scarcely interest the general reader.

NOTICE OF THE LANGUAGE OF THE BULGARIANS.

According to certain opinions, Bulgaria, and the adjacent regions of Macedonia, are the real home of the old Slavic language. No other dialect, however, has been so much affected as the Bulgarian, by the course of time and foreign influence; Bulgaria having been for centuries the great thoroughfare of other nations. The history of this country is a series of continued warfare with the Servians, Greeks, and Hungarians on one hand; and, on the other, with the Turks, who subdued them, and put an end to the existence of a Bulgarian kingdom in 1392. The feeble germs of cultivation diffused there by two or three of their princes, perished during the Turkish invasion. There is no trace of a literature, and the only point of view from which the language, uncultivated as it is, can excite a general interest, consists in the national songs, in which this dialect is said to be exceedingly rich.

PART III.

WESTERN STEM.

NOTICE OF THE CZEKISH OR BOHEMIAN BRANCH.

Of all the Slavic languages, the Bohemian dialect and literature is the only one which, to the Protestant reader, must be of more than general interest;—not so much by its own character, in which it differs little from the other Slavic languages, but from those remarkable circumstances which more or less affected almost every part of Europe. The names of Huss and Jerome of Prague, and the events which rendered their names conspicuous, are familiar. The Bohemians having become ready to maintain their convictions not less with the pen than with the sword, the theological literature of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and the first twenty years of the seventeenth century, is of an extent with

which that of no other Slavic language can be compared. Most of these productions bear decidedly the stamp of the period, dictated by the polemical spirit of the age, and for the most part directed by one party against another; but on the other hand, while the theological literature of all the other Slavic nations is almost exclusively limited to sermons and devotional books, among the Bohemians alone researches and interpretations are met with, of theological matters of a higher sphere.

There are few branches of science or art in which the Bohemians have not to boast of some eminent name. The talent, however, for which this nation is the most distinguished, is that of music. A fondness for music, and a natural gift to execute it, are indeed common to all Slavic nations; but the talent of the Bohemian is of a superior order. He unites the spirit of harmony, characteristic of the Germans, with the gift of melody belonging to the Italians; and there is hardly anything which strikes the English and

American traveller more than the prevalence of musical genius in that beautiful region. The Bohemian language is spoken not only by the Bohemians and the Moravians, but by nearly two millions of Slovaks, those venerable remains of the ancient Slavic settlements between the Carpathian mountains and the rivers Theiss and Danube; yet the latter have a dialect, or rather dialects, essentially different from the language in Bohemia and Moravia.

According to old chronicles, there were even some regular schools erected in early times,—one near Prague, and another, later, in Prague itself, where Latin was taught: thus the Latin and German languages had an early influence on the formation of the Bohemian. It yields neither in copiousness nor in pliability, neither in clearness nor in precision, to any other Slavic language. In respect to sound, however, the reproach of harshness and want of euphony has been made with justice, although it appears that this is more a production of modern times than an

ingredient of the original language; for the ancient Bohemian, in legends and national songs, sounds by far more melodious. After this remark it seems singular that in a country where such an extent of musical talent prevails, a language should be spoken of so much harshness.

Five periods are assigned to the history of the Bohemian literature.

The *first* comprises the whole interval from the first knowledge of the Czecks to the influence of Huss, or from 550 to 1400.

The *second* period from Huss to the general diffusion of the art of printing.

The *third* extends to the battle at the White Mountain, 1620.

The *fourth* from this battle to 1774 and 1780.

The *fifth* period embraces the interval from 1780 to the present time.

First Period.

Of the language of the Czecks, as it existed

when they first settled in Bohemia, nothing is left, except the names of the rivers, mountains, towns, and those of their first chiefs. All this induces to conclude that the language was then the same as at the present time. The first certain written documents are not older than the introduction of Christianity.

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the influence of German customs and habits showed itself more and more, and the nobility began to use in preference the German language. In calling, therefore, the Bohemian lyric poetry of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the echo of the German, would be to convey the idea that the same spirit inspired the Bohemians and the Germans. During the fourteenth century the influence of the latter increased so considerably that the jealousy of the nation was much excited. German fashions in dress and manners prevailed at the court, and the king kept a German body-guard. Under Charles I., or the Emperor Charles IV., as he is termed, Bohemia reached

the highest point of splendour ; he limited the privileges of the Germans, and thus reconciled the minds of the Bohemians.

Second Period.

At the commencement of the fifteenth century, the University of Prague had reached the summit of its prosperity. No department of science was neglected, theology, however, excited the most animated interest ; the attention in spiritual matters being no longer confined, but pervading all classes. Immediately after Wickliffe's death an intercourse had been established between England and Bohemia, by the marriage of a Bohemian princess, Ann, to Richard the Second of England. A young Bohemian nobleman, who had finished his studies in Prague, repaired to Oxford, and on his return placed into the hands of John Huss, at that time Professor of Theology at Prague, a copy of all Wickliffe's writings. The pretensions of Rome had been for some

time looked upon in Bohemia with disapprobation, no wonder, then, if the opinions and expressions of the Reformers found a ready echo in the breasts of their hearers, so far that in the year 1414, in consequence of his convictions, Huss was summoned to appear before the Council of Constance; but although he exculpated himself completely, the Council persisted in condemning him to be burned alive, on the 6th of July, 1415. His friend Jerome shared the same fate on the 30th of May, 1416.

Keeping only in view the fate of the language, the reader is referred to the historical accounts of this melancholy period; and to those events allusion has merely been made, inasmuch as they had a certain influence on the Bohemian language and literature.

Although religion filled the minds during this period more than in any other, it did not absorb all the interest; besides, in the midst of those struggles which mark the epoch, arts and science necessarily remained neglected.

The Bohemian language, although improving with the fifteenth century, had however not yet supplanted the Latin. In respect to the date of the introduction of printing, the first regular establishment in Prague is not older than 1487.

Third Period.

It is chiefly for the sake of clearness if this period is separated from the former; in its character it was entirely the same. What the Bohemians, in respect to the language, had acquired in the one, they possessed in the other; what was known to few, now became diffused amongst many; but the objects, the stamp of both centuries, were similar. The extent of the Bohemian national literature increased during the sixteenth century so rapidly, and the opportunities for cultivation became so numerous, that the difficulty of giving a condensed or distinct review is much augmented.

During the reign of Rudolph, great attention

was paid to the Bohemian language ; but still it existed only side by side with the Latin. The field, however, which appears to have been cultivated with the most diligence, was that of theology,—and fortunately with an equal degree of talent.

The battle at the White Mountain near Prague, in 1620, so disastrous to the Protestants, decided the destiny of Bohemia, as well as the fate of the language, the latter having since never been used in public business.

Fourth Period.

Of this period there is but little to say. A dull pressure lay upon the nation, as if paralysed. Innumerable monks came from all parts, who condemned and burned every Bohemian book, those which they did not destroy were deposited in separate chambers in the convents, provided with iron gratings, bolts, and chains. There were, however, some exceptions among these zealots,—

persons, who, independent of religious prejudices, continued to labour for the preservation of the mother tongue.

The greater part of what was written during this period proceeded from the Slovaks in Hungary, a nation related to the Bohemians in race and language, who after the reformation had adopted the Bohemian dialect as their literary language, especially under the protection of Maria Theresa.

Fifth Period.

At that time, 1774, the neglect of the Bohemian language is very evident, and it required the entire energy and influence of several persons of distinction to revive it; and owing to diligence and literary productiveness, the long interval of a dull and death-like silence soon disappeared, and the aimed at revival was produced.

The zeal which at the present time appears to

have been manifested to follow out the traces of the language and history of the Slavic races, in the remotest past, has no where been exhibited with more ardour and disinterestedness than in Bohemia ; but whether such efforts will have any ultimate result, and may prevent the Bohemian language from gradually yielding to the German, the future alone will demonstrate. The torrent of time, in its resistless course frequently overwhelming nations, disperses their vestiges in scattered fragments, as feeble memorials for an inquiring posterity that they once existed.

NOTICE OF THE LANGUAGE OF THE SLOVAKS.

The north-western part of Hungary is inhabited by the Slovaks, who appear to be the direct descendants of the original Slavic settlers in Europe. Byzantine historians mention nomadic tribes, whose name incontestably indicates the Slavi, as having troubled the Byzantine

Empire in early times. But they soon disappeared from history, and it is not before the ninth century, when they were already Christians, that they are again mentioned. Part of Panonia was inhabited by the Slovaks, whence they were pressed back into the mountains by the Magyars, who in 894 conquered Panonia. Although the Slovaks submitted to their fate, and lived thenceforth on good terms with their conquerors, yet, even after nearly a thousand years have passed, they still speak their original language ; the latter, however, is the only remnant of their national existence.

The Slovakish language, exposed, through the geographical situation of the nation, to the influence of various other Slavic idioms, is more broken up into different dialects than perhaps any other living tongue.

To enumerate the features which distinguish the Slovakish dialects would oblige to enter into uninteresting details. The only thing which belongs to the Slovaks exclusively is a variety

of diphthongs, where all the other Slavic dialects have simple vowels.

The Slovakish language has never been a literary language, having been so far oppressed that even historical songs, familiar nearly a hundred years ago, have perished. It is a singular fact, that whilst every where else the friends of Protestantism have attempted to raise the dialect generally in use, in opposition to a privileged idiom of the priesthood, among the Slovaks, this resuscitation has been attempted by the Romanists, meeting with strong opposition from the Protestants. Many among the Slovaks have received a German education, and having therefore the German language at command, those who write use it in preference.

NOTICE OF THE POLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE.

After the Vandals and Goths had finally left the regions of the Baltic and Lower Vistula,

they were occupied towards the fourth century by the Lithuanians, who, according to so m historians, are Slavic, according to others Scythic tribes. The various nations which inhabited this country were, it appears, comprised under the name Sarmatæ. In the sixth or seventh century, the Lekhes, coming from the Carpathian neighbourhood, settled on the banks of the Vistula and Varta; the latter, divided into several tribes, were called Polyanie, inhabitants of the plain; the specific name of Poles does not appear until the close of the tenth century. From 965, all the Polish princes, and the greater part of the nation, became Christians; but neither from those early times, nor from the four or five centuries after the introduction of Christianity, does there remain any monument whatever of the Polish language,—nay, with the exception of a few fragments without value, the most ancient document of that language is not older than the sixteenth century. Until that time the Latin exclusively predominated in Poland;

hence arose a neglect of the vernacular, and hence the private influence of the German, still visible in the Polish language. But although this operated unfavourably upon the language, foreign influence was in other respects not injurious to the literary development. Benedictine monks founded in the beginning of the eleventh century the first Polish schools, and numerous convents and other orders offered an asylum, when in 1241 the Mongols broke into the country, and also during the civil wars caused by the dissensions of the reigning family.

The history of the Polish language is generally divided into five periods :—

The *first* extends from the introduction of Christianity to Casimir the Great, 1333.

The *second* from 1333 to 1506, or the reign of Sigismond I.

The *third* closes with the foundation of the schools by the Jesuits, 1622.

The *fourth* comprises the time of the pre-

ponderance of the Jesuits, and ends with the revival of literature in 1760.

The *fifth* period comprehends the interval from 1760 to the revolution in 1830.

The Polish literature of the present day bearing a different stamp from that of former times, a sixth period could be added, extending from 1830 to the most recent period.

Before entering, however, upon a historical account of those divisions, a few remarks concerning the history and character of the language itself may find a place here. The extent of country in which the Polish is predominant, is much smaller than would naturally be concluded from the great circuit of territory, which, at the time of its power and independence, was comprised under the Kingdom of Poland. The sixteenth century must be excepted, when Poland, by the success of its arms, became for a short time the most powerful state in the north. The Teutonic Knights, the conquerors of Prussia,

were then compelled to acknowledge its protection, when not only Livonia and Courland, but even the ancient Smolensk and the venerable Kief, the royal seat of Vladimir, and the Russian provinces adjacent to Galicia, were subjugated by Poland. Besides the language of the country, the Malo-Russian and White-Russian dialects are spoken in several provinces. The inhabitants of the cities and the nobility of Galicia, belonging to Austria, the inhabitants of Cracow, and the Duchy of Posen in Prussia, and of other Prussian and Austrian provinces, speak the Polish language. Thus it is spoken by about ten millions, with slight variations.

The ancient Polish seems to have been nearly related to the dialects of the Czecks and Sorabians. Although very little is known in respect to the circumstances and progress of the formation of the language into its present state, it is evident that it has been developed from the

conflict of its natural elements with the Latin and German.

Of all the Slavic dialects, the Polish presents to the foreigner the most difficulties ; partly on account of the great variety of shades in the pronunciation of the vowels, and from the combination of consonants in such a manner that only a Slavic tongue can conquer them, and cause the apparent harshness to disappear ; partly on account of its refined and artificial structure. In this latter it differs materially from the Russian language, which, although equally rich, is remarkable for its simplicity and perspicuity.

First Period.

The early part of the history of the Polish literature is divided into two periods, although it seems singular to pretend to give an account

of a literature which did not yet exist ; it does not indeed properly begin before the close of the second period. Of the language itself nothing is left but the names of places and persons, and some Polish words scattered through the Latin documents of the time, often hardly intelligible. There exists an ancient war-song, but even this is, in its present form, not older than the fourteenth century. All that remains from this period is in Latin.

In Poland, longer than in any other country, education was entirely in the hands of the ecclesiastics ; for several hundred years the natives were excluded from all clerical dignities and privileges, and the numerous monasteries were filled with foreign monks, even as late as the fifteenth century. These narrow-minded or cunning men were in the habit of destroying whatever they could find written in the Polish language, and, as instructors, had a facility to fill the heads of the young nobility with unnatural

prejudices against the language of their own country.

Second Period.

Casimir is one of those princes who acquired the name of the Great, not by victories and conquests, but through the benefits bestowed upon his subjects. His father, Vladislaus Lokietek, had resumed the royal title, and was the first who permanently united Great and Little Poland. Under Casimir, the present Austrian kingdom of Galicia was added by inheritance, and Lithuania became a Polish fief in 1386, but only completely incorporated in 1569.

As to the influence of Casimir the Great upon the cultivation of his subjects, it was more mediate than immediate. Whilst his contemporary and neighbour, Charles IV., of Bohemia, promoted the cultivation of the lan-

guage spoken within his dominion, Casimir paid no attention whatever to the vernacular of his country.

The history of the Polish language properly commences only with the close, or at the utmost with the middle, of the present period, when in the year 1488 the first printing-office was erected at Cracow. Of the more ancient times only weak and scattered traces are left; the manuscripts remaining are fragments, documents relating to suits of law, translations of statutes in Latin, the ten commandments in verse, &c. The orthography of the language must have caused a great deal of trouble, some writers using alternately the Latin, Bohemian, and the German method of forming and combining letters.

Third Period.

In northern climates the bright days of

summer follow in almost immediate succession a long and gloomy winter, without allowing to the lover of nature the enjoyment of observing, during the transient interval of spring, the gradual development of the beauty of the earth. Thus the flowers of Polish literature burst forth with a rapidity unequalled in literary history. The university of Cracow had been reinstituted under Jagello in 1400, and organized after that of Prague. Although the most flourishing period of this institution was the sixteenth century, yet it presented during the fifteenth to the Polish nobility a good opportunity of studying the classics; and it is doubtless through this familiarity with the ancient writers that the celerity of literary development, alluded to, must be principally accounted for. It was, moreover, now when Christian Europe began to make decided efforts for more expansion of thought. The wild flame of false religious zeal, which in Poland also, under the

sons and immediate successors of Jagello, had spread, was extinguished before the milder wisdom of Sigismund I. The activity of the Inquisition was restrained, but the new doctrines found a more decided support in Sigismund Augustus ; Poland became under his administration the seat of a toleration then unequalled in the world.

The Bohemian language acquired during this period a great influence upon the Polish, as well as Protestantism on the literature of Poland, although its doctrines have occupied there the minds less than those of any other nation amongst whom they have been received.

The Polish language acquired during the sixteenth century such a degree of refinement that even on the revival of literature and taste in modern times, nothing was necessary to add for its improvement. The practical use which was made of the language for a variety of subjects, contributed still more to its cultivation ;

but the point in which it acquired less perfection was that of orthography, owing to the manner in which several consonants are combined. This system of letters forms the connecting link between the Polish and the languages of western Europe.

So early as under Casimir, the son of Jagello, the Polish language began to be employed at the Court; but a language which issued from the latter was necessarily also dependent on the changes of the Court; thus Stephen Bathory, prince of Transylvania, who was elected after Henry of Valois had deserted the country, was, as a foreigner, in the habit of interspersing his conversation and writings with Latin words. It is hardly admissible that this habit of the king could have any influence on a language already so well cultivated, although the general fashion of mixing Latin words and phrases with the Polish is ascribed to it.

The cultivation of the language of the country,

and the study of the Latin, have indeed ever proceeded with equal steps in Poland. For ordinary conversation, even, they were used alternately. So, for instance, Sigismund I., when separated from his first queen, Barbara, maintained with her a correspondence in Latin; and his second queen, Bona Sforza, habitually employed that language in their most familiar intercourse.

The facility of rhyme in a language so rich in rhymes, seduced several to use verse as a vehicle for the most trivial thoughts, or for subjects the very nature of which is opposed to poetry. Eloquence, so nearly related to poetry, and which, nevertheless, perhaps on that account should be distinguished from it by the most definite limits, is a gift for the cultivation of which the Poles possess all the necessary qualities.

It is to be remarked that the Polish theological literature of this period evinced less of a pole-

mical spirit than might have been expected in an age when that of the neighbouring countries abounded in controversial books, replete with unchristian bitterness. The wise moderation of the two Sigismunds and of Stephen Bathory, seems to have pacified the minds, and to have kept them within appropriate limits, in that respect.

History, especially national history, was considered as one of the subjects most worthy of attention,—it is the great school upon the application of lessons which it gives, the fate of nations depends. In this department, however, the Latin was preferred; and so with regard to works on science.

Fourth Period.

The noble race of the Jagellons being extinct on the death of Sigismund Augustus in 1572,

Poland became an elective monarchy; the nation being understood to consist legally of the nobility only. Stephen Bathory's energy kept the discordant elements together, and at home he took care to improve the administration of justice, while his victorious arms, for a short time, raised Poland to the summit of its glory; but under his successor began that anarchy which is considered as the principal cause of Poland's final calamitous fate. To fundamental evils, combined with other disastrous events, the building, weakened in its foundation, could make no resistance, and its walls gave way when they were suddenly shaken by powerful enemies from without.

The perversion of taste which at the beginning of the seventeenth century predominated in Italy, created also in the literature of Poland a new period. To the remarkable activity of mind in the preceding period there followed a sort of lethargy. The fashion first introduced at the

close of the preceding period of interspersing the Polish language with Latin words and phrases, became during the present more and more predominant; and was at length carried so far as to give to Polish words a false Latin sound. French, German, and Italian forms of expression soon obtained the same right; but what affected the language most, was that even the natural structure had to make place to an imitation of foreign idioms. Thus its great pliancy, one of its principal excellencies, became a source of its corruption.

Poland, moreover, at a time when the minds of the rest of Europe were tolerably pacified in a religious respect, became the scene of theological controversies full of acrimony, and subsequently even of persecution. The general mental lethargy which began to reign in Poland during this period, can hardly be ascribed to any other influence than to the promoters of the bitterness of feeling just alluded to. Lite-

rature and the fine arts, however, found a friend and protector in a gifted and accomplished king, and in several distinguished noblemen. But the period of pedantry and perversion of taste had already lasted more than a hundred and thirty years; very difficult, therefore, it became to eradicate abuses and deformities.

Fifth Period.

The Polish language at the beginning of this period was in a melancholy state; stripped of its natural perspicuity, simplicity, and strength, deformed by tastelessness, it had grown childish. It was fortunate that just at the time when several of the most influential Polish noblemen began to feel an intense interest in their neglected language, a number of gifted minds appeared, who showed so much activity that the field of

Polish literature soon flourished again. Various measures were taken; but the new patrons could not wait. The French literature of the day, with its levity and splendour, seemed to be more in harmony with the spirit of the Court. In this way may be explained in part the superficial and light tone which prevails in all the Polish works of this age, during a period when vehement passions and furious contests already tore the country in pieces. But even the most violent party struggles seemed to be favourable to literature. The minds were in a state of excitement, which gave power to produce the most extraordinary things; a reaction, however, very naturally followed. After twenty years of mental struggles and combats, succeeded a calm, an intellectual blank, of more than twelve years. It was as if with the dissolution of the kingdom the nation had sunk into a state of intellectual apathy. The interval from 1795 to 1807, in comparison with the years which preceded and

have followed, was remarkably sterile ; translations augmented with undue proportion, and the purity of the language suffered considerably.

The French language, independently of the events of modern times, had already acted powerfully on the Polish at the close of the preceding period ; for more than half a century it reigned with unlimited precedence over all the literary world,—but its most absolute dominion was in Poland. In the manners of the nobility, French gracefulness and ease were, in a peculiar and interesting manner, blended with the heroism of the knight and the luxuriousness and ostentation of the Asiatic. French refinement covered the rudeness and revelry characteristic of the middle ages ; and a journey to France was among the requisite conditions of an accomplished education.

The Polish writers—all of them belonging to the higher class—to whom, from their youth,

the French was equally familiar with their own language, unconsciously disfigured the latter by Gallicisms; since French forms of expression seemed to be the best adapted for the expression of French thoughts, although the rich and pliant Polish language was decidedly opposed to such anomalies.

The Polish language, the purity of which at the beginning of the present period was an object of particular attention, has been, in the present century, a subject of numerous inquiries, some of which have thrown considerable light upon the Slavic languages and history in general.

There is no branch in which the Poles manifested a greater want of original power than the dramatic. Here the influence of the French school was most decided, and indeed exclusive. Pains were taken by the most distinguished persons of the nation to establish a national stage, to which they looked, not in the light of

amusement, but as a school for purifying and elevating the national language.

With respect to novels, tales in prose, and similar productions, the literature of Poland has been much less overwhelmed than that of the Russians.

For the study of polite literature and the Slavic languages during this period Warsaw was the principal seat; for other branches, the University of Wilna.

In consequence of the Grand Duke Constantine's predilection for mathematics, an undue share of attention, after the erection of the kingdom under his administration, was paid to the exact or empirical sciences, — undue, because other branches were necessarily neglected.

It is a singular fact, that although down to the year 1818, when tours in foreign countries were prevented, as one of the favourite means of education among the Polish nobility, their literature exhibits hardly any books of travels.

Sixth Period.

If the literature of a country could ever be regarded completely—if it was not in intimate connection with the position of its country—this period would have commenced about fifteen years previous to 1830. But while these fifteen years may be considered in some measure as the time of the fermentation of that spirit which broke out in 1830; this latter year, with the attempts made to annihilate the higher seats of learning, forms an epoch not only in Polish history in general, but especially in its literature. The war, which called into exercise all the mental faculties of the nation, suspended consequently all literary activity; but even during the more quiet period which immediately succeeded, the dejected spirits of the nation are visible in the results of their intellectual pursuits. The Universities of Warsaw and Wilna

were broken up, and the valuable libraries of these institutions carried to St. Petersburg. After some years a new University was founded at Kief. In a consistent manner the language and the peculiarities of the country were everywhere checked, and attempts made to replace them by Russian customs and the Russian language. There was indeed a suspense of mental life in Poland.

A striking contrast, however, is observable in the spirit with which the numerous emigrants, especially in France, endeavoured to reanimate the dying embers. A deep enthusiasm pervades some of their efforts; others are apparently dictated by mental excitement, or enveloped in a certain mystical atmosphere, which renders a commentary necessary in order to understand them. Meanwhile the department of belles-lettres in Poland itself, seems to have taken the same national direction which characterizes the Russian and Bohemian tendencies in modern times,

many of the productions, within this category, being intended for the *boudoir*, or calculated to satisfy the immediate wants of the reading class.

In conclusion, a few lines containing general remarks may not be out of place.

Translations, of whatever description, must lose the original peculiarities and principal charms, but more so with regard to poetical productions. The animating power of national poetry appears to be gone. The genius of poetry, however, although dormant, is still living ; and nowhere, perhaps, is it more preserved than amongst some of the Slavic races ; their pathetic or sentimental songs, handed down from generation to generation, are exclusively original, and differ in that respect from the Teutonic or Gallic ro-

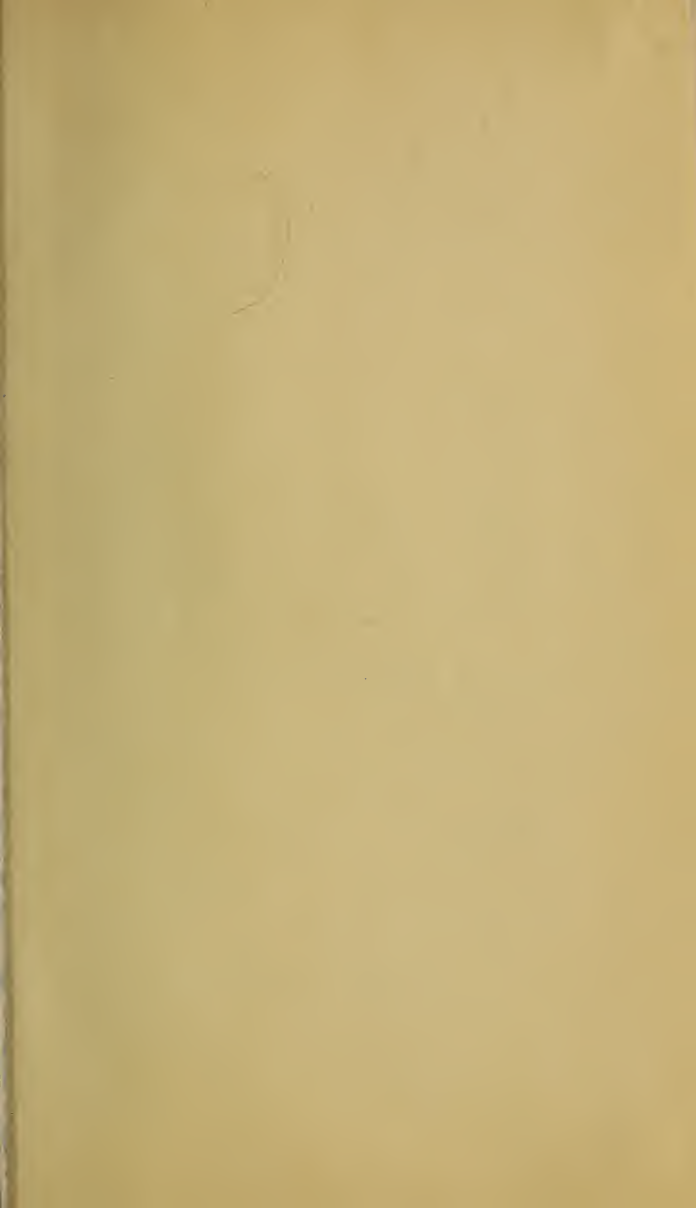
mance. The feeling expressed in the Slavic songs is the effusion of natural heartfelt sensation, in all its different shades of affection ; never eccentric, but always natural, undisguised.

For a more extensive view and full comprehension of Slavic national poetry, the inquirer must divest himself of his habitual ideas ; he must adopt foreign conception and prejudice ; he will have to transport himself into a foreign clime, where the east and the west, the north and the south, blend in strange and striking amalgamation. The suppleness of Asia and the energy of Europe, the passive fatalism of the Turk and the active religion of the Christian, the revengeful spirit of the oppressed and the child-like resignation of him who submits,—all these seeming contradictions find an expressive organ in Slavic poetry.

Surveying the fate of some of the Slavonic nations, whose names are scarcely mentioned in modern history ; examining their ruins, dilapi-

dated monuments, and other remaining vestiges, —all indicating a once high degree of civilization and even refinement,—impressions must be produced which not so soon vanish. The lessons conveyed by such contemplations are of a profound character, exhibiting in strong colours “grandeur past and splendour lost!”

THE END.







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